

[A speckled hen and her chickens]

[Livingston ala?]

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R.P.T. [artt?]

A speckled hen and her chickens scratched coutentedly contentedly in the small front yard of a four room cottage [,?] [?] blue Roman hyacinths and yellow Jonquils [?] [splashed gay color in little [trefts?] on the grassy lawn.?)

An old man in a faded wash suit sat on the narrow porch and rocked in a home-made hickory chair.

“Come on in if you ain't afraid of a cold because that's what me an my old lady's [/Got?] an' might bad one ones at that ,” he called. “ I'm just settin' out here in the sunshine trying to make up my mind to go put up them chickens for her, 'cause the cow kicked her over yestidy yestiddy and she can't git bout about to-day. She [/ Want?] tryin' ter hook her or nothing like that, you see that old cow's blind in one eye , and my old lady wuz milkin' her and that little dog there run between her legs and the cow give an a sudden turn and knocked the old lady flat. # “ Her head sort of struck the side of the barn ” he added worriedly and that's what's troubling her worse en any thing else. I took her in to see Dr. Scales last night and he give her someting something to ease her pain and shen Then stropped her up, pretty tight[.?] He said she might have broke [er?] a rib er two ; couldn't couldn't tell[.?] then agin hit could be er a floatin' kidney. [Then he chuckled 'an said

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confidentially, “ She's sick so much I tale her if the cow hadn't knocked her down 'twould er been some-thin' else , but she says that's sorry comfort. # “ I just been telling her while she's laid up I think if we had er a stork of corn for ever one of them little old johnnie johnny -jump- up ups out there that hit will would look jes as pretty , and we'll we'd be a heap [?] sight better off, but she'd have a fit if them chickens scratched up er a one of them little old flower bushes. [??] Yes sir, my wife claims raisin corn is my job ; but the says them flower bushes been there ever since she come here, and there they're gonna stay. # Come to think of it they're been there a lot longer than that, 'cause this here is Pa's old place en Ma set them flowers out right after they moven moved here from on the ' [igbee?] Bigbee. I went want noting nothing but a little 2 shaver then [.?] well I wont want so little either , 'bout twelve I reckon, an' I'm goin' on 71 now. Been livin' right here ever since then. “ I was born tho' on my grandfather's plantation 'bout four miles from here at what they called old Martin's ferry. [?] “Yessum my grandfather Marie Marius Martin was French and that ferry was named fer him, that's how come it sounds different from the way you call it. Yes [?] he wuz French all right, an him and his brother come over here on a boat when they wuz little fellers [??]. [Gran?] Grand -Pa was sixteen , an his brother was 14. Grand-Pa said hit wuz 3 days 'fore any body knowed they wuz on that boat. They were jes stored away and never had nothin' but a little ole hardtac hardtack , or sometin' somethin' like that to eat that they bought brought with them. “ His brother died in New York en never got to Alabama but Grand-Pa went on to [irginia?] Virginia and finally married there a woman name Mary Ann Cathey [.?] they had one child an that was Ma , en her name wuz [usan?] Susan Matilda Martin. Ma wuz er a baby in arms , or you might say jes todlin toddlin' 'bout cause I've heered er her say when they caome come to labama Alabama in the early days they come in a covered wagon , en that little chair over there come right with em. They were 'mong the first to cross the river, the [1st?] white settlers round here , and they had to build a raft [by?] tie [my?] poles to-gether together so as to cross the [igbee?] 'Bigbee, [?] ma, [??] said she tried to play in the water while they were polin' em across , and she fell in[?] [?] er a negro boy they owned called Lewis Martin pulled her out. # My grand-father bought up a lot of land right there on the [igbee?] Bigbee where they crossed at , and later

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built Martin Martin's Ferry and lived there the rest of his life. At least his family did, but he wuz er a land speculator and went all over every where buyin' up land 'til he was one of the richest men in this part of the country [,?] [?] if old -ewis Lewis [artin?] Martin, that same nigger what pulled Ma out the river , had lived , I'd have as much as any-body the rest of my days. You see the Yankees marched on Livingston and the [?] Confederates sent out runners telling every body. Well there [?] want no banks here then , so grand-pa 3 took er a old black pot and wrapped up \$ 150,000 in gold and put in it, and him and Lewis carried it out on the river and burried buried it & grand-Pa told Lewis if he tole anybody where it wuz , he'd kill him. # Well it was too bad ???????? [That?] night Grand Pa came back home en the excetement excitement run high, I [?] [dunno?] what all happened but I reckon hit wuz too much fer him” , anyhow he had er a and was dead 'fore anybody ever knowed he'd hid the money. He just [wont?] want in his clear mind no mo' after that , en when it come to paying the funeral expenses Grand-Ma [Grand/Ma?] couldn't find the money , en Lewis I reckon wuz skeered to tell ! [#] Well er a long time after that Lewis sent fer me one dark night[?] he'd had er tooth pulled over in Marengo en erysiplas erysipl'as set in and the [socter?] Doctor said [wont?] want no hope fer him[.] [#] [?] “Well he told his wife to send fer “ ' Little Marster ” ' (that was whut Lewis always called me) [?] cause [??] he wuz gonna die en he wanted to tell [?] him where the white oak tree wuz on the [?] Bigbee where they burried buried the money when the Yankee Yankees come. “ [#] I tole Pa I was goin to see 'bout old Lewis [?] but when I got there Lewis was as dead as a door nail. His wife wuz so skeered she couldn't recollect nothing he had said , jes ' er a white oak , she kept mumbling and that was all. Well we looked fer er a long time but didn't no body ever find nothing. Twas too much territory and too many white oaks. [?] 'Course Pa had er a heap of land left him, but John Mckinnis, (lived right up yonder near that old church) beat him out of pretty near all he had. Grand-Pa you see speculated in Florida and owned one hundred and eleven sections right where Tallahassee stands today. He owned a mile square at Pensacola where they had the first fishing shacks , and sixteen plantations in Maringo, Marengo , Green and [?] Hale , but John Mckinnis beat him out of most every bit of it. Not young John of Meridian, but his Pa , old an man John Mckinnis. He

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took one hundred and eighty bales of cotton on a boat down the river to Mobile and sold hit, claimed somehow hit belonged to him, but it was old Mrs Thedford's, ([ick hedford's?] Dick Thedford's Ma) and she never got a cent out of it. [?] Young John was one of the biggest scoundrels in this section of the country ; a [????] natural born theif thief. Yes sir we ought to have er a heap we ain't got. Been 4 here long enough an an' all of us hard worker workers . # “ When my Grand-Pa [GrandPa?] come here there [wont?] want no Epes, this here wuz all [?? Jones Bluff in them days, name fer [?] a old half breed Indian Jim Jones. He owned 'most all this land 'round here from Warsaw to the Choctaw line. The tribes had given him a lot of it, and all the early settlers like J.P. Hillman and Abe Hillman, old man [?] Billie Holloway and Jim Lee's father , they wanted to buy it from him. He lived up 'bout the fort on the [?] 'Bigbee [.?] you can see where the fort used to be from over here, Well one night (Christmas eve I believer believe) it was , was back in 1833 these early white settlers got to-gether together an' went up there they said to make Jim [?] good offer fer his land, [cose?] I dunno whut it wuz it wuz they offered him, but Jim refused to sell and they killed him and burried buried him right there on the river , and in 1915 when the Colonial [?] Dames of [?] America wuz having that piece of Marble put there to mark the old [fort?] Fort, I I'm [?] [blest?] if they didn't [?] dig up old Jim Jones ' bones. Cose Co'se they burried 'em ergin right erlong along close by in that bunch of cedar trees , but it seem seems sort of sad to me, to think about old Jim. # “ Then [?] Jim's son in-law er a Frenchman name La Bruce what married Jims Jim's indian daughter, claimed the land , en so they had to trade with him. Ma said he wuz wr a nice gentleman to be married to that indian, but he left here / en went down in [Miss.?] with the rest of 'em and Inever [heored?] heared whut become of him. # “ Yes sir right up there where old Jim Jones lived stood the old Fort [Tombecbes?] Tombecbe as she was called , built by the order of the Governor of Louisiana , [?] Bienville, and it says on the monument whut is true , I know ” ' Here civilization and [?] Savagery beheld the Goory Glory or of [rance?] France . # [es?] “Yes sir I wuz right there the day they unveiled her[.?] fact is I barbecued every bit of the meat fer the dinner , en hit wuz erbout about ez good er a [barbecue?] ez I ever et , if I do say so myself. [eflin?] Heflin wuz the speaker en he's er a good 'en , but I ain't never voted fer

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him yit, en never will fur ez that goes. # “ Yes that old [?] Fort has seen er a heap uv blood shed. The French, [?] British and Spaniards. It [/Used?] to be called “ ' Fort [onfederation?] Confederation . ” ' Close by there the whites treated with the chactaw choctaw 5 indians old Mushulatubbe [Pucksbenubbee?] and Pushmataha for the land they owned [east?] of the [?]. # “ [?] I can remember the indians around here many as 75 or a hundred when they'd come in the spring with blow-guns , arrows and baskets. The squaws would sit down flat on the gourn'd ground with the papooses strapped on their backs and [waid?] wait for the indian men to do the tradin'. There were [3?] saloons here in them days but it was against the law ot to sell ” ' fire water “ ' as they called it, to the indians, but when the indians were ready to start home they'd let em 'em have a few drinks and I can hear 'em yelling “ ' whoop pee ” ' right now as they rode off toward the bottoms. # [-'ve?] “I've [heored?] heard Ma tell so much I can't honestly tell what I did see , en what I didn't but she knowed this country when they had so many little black bears here my Gran-Pa had to take the nigger niggers ins in shifs en let some sleep day so at night they [?] could take torches and beat on [?] tim buckets in the corn field to keep the bears from eatin' up all the rosenneers, and they said they had high palin's to try to keep the bears from catching the chillun. [ose?] [Cose?] this was all cleared up when [?] I come erlong , but I recollect fust electric lights, here at Jones Bluff. The [tlanta?] Atlanta Constitution come out saying the Hattie B. Moore would come up the river next run with electrc electric lights, my goodness you never saw so many folks in all your life as was on the river banks all up and down the river , men women en chillun , waitin fer that boat. Pretty soon here she come puffin' en er [?] blowin' en hit wuz er sight to behold. Looked like the whole [shebo?] [shebang?] was on fire. See there wuz 3 boats fun run up and down the river here to Mobile. The Hard Cash, The Tally , and he The [?] Hattie B. Moore. The [ain-deer?] Rain-Deer run here too but she sunk. [Il?] All them boats run 'til June, they stopped in June, had landings like Gainesville, Jones bluff, [ials?] Dials landing 'bout four miles down the river from here, and Dirdens landing where [alzell?] Balzell and all his family was raised at, and the Brassfield landing come in there at [orkland?] Forkland . [hem?] Them Demopolis and so on down to Mobile.

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Boats want allowed to 6 come out on Sunday t'all, had to come out on Saddy and dock [about?] above the tide-water or else wait 'til a Monday Mornin'.

Pa used to load cotton fer Mr Hillman, ([lberts?] Albert's Pa up there,) here at Jones Bluff and I'd be erlong with him. Seen him put on as many as 5 or 6 thousand bales at a time. The mate would come out on top of one them bluffs with er a ax handle in his hand and holler at dem niggers, cuss em, and some time I've seed him knock one of em off them lime rock cliffs. My me he was cruel. See the niggers had to load en unload every thing. [They'?] They'd tote to the stores the sugar and flour and coffee in big sacks brought up from de merchants in Mobile, en some time a nigger would git pretty careless en drop er sack en bust it, Lordy but he'd be sorry 'fore dat mate got thru wid him. See the mate always come out on land , but the Captain he stayed on the boat. As I remember they had 12 deck hands, 2 engineers, en 8 pilots day en night shift. Had 2 what they called rouser-bouts one for day an' one for night to spilt up the ligh'ood for the torch pans. Had 2 little baskets on each side held kerosine lamps for the [dead? head -lights, and if they'd land here at night they'd run hand hang out a couple of them little torch pans on a tree so as to see how to git up de bluff with all the stuff they had. That was before the Hattie B. got electric lights. Man she was a pretty sight as I ever seen. Now you take the people that used to go backwards en forwards to Mobile on them boats. [They they ?] had a great beig big hotel for em in them days right up there on the Bigbee , back of where Doc Henegan used ter live, en they'd all come down en stay at that hotel waitin' fer the boat , and if you were a planter and had any cotton to sell those commission merchants didnt thank think nothin to pay all your expenses on the boat to Mobile , and all you had to do wuz jes sell 'em your cotton. They'd make you have a good time all right. [?] [they?] show fed good on the boats too. Deck hands et on 1st deck and white folks up in de cabins. They'd stop en git er cow or er pig , and cut 7 it up and dress it nice. and they had might mighty good cooks too en every body could eat all they mind to. Want no body to stop you. [Many's?] Manys the time I've rid on them steam boats. [?] I like liked Mobile so much [?] I thought after I [growned?] up I'd like to settle there en I did fer er little while, the I

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come back to be with Ma and Pa, en here I been ever since. I run the [?] [Epes?] [otton?] Cotton oil [?] Company's mill at night fer 'bout twent twenty three years, them [?] I was the tollkeeper yonder on that bridge [?] [?] they freed hit, there 'bout six years [lasting?] form from September 'til [march?] March . [?] Right there's where I kilt [??] Red Windham . You remember hearin' bout that I reckon don't you ? Well Red was a Liakable [sort?] of fellow when he wont want drinking , but trouble was he was always drinking, he didnt want to pay no toll en I didnt didn't want to have no trouble 'bout that little money , but seemed like he was just looking for trouble , en it come to [?] [?] question of me er hem him , en I seed one or the other of us wuz gonna die sure en certain , so I lowed hit wuzn't no need of it being me, so long as [?] I was in the right cordin' [to?] law any way, so I had to kill him. Pretty had bad en I ain't got over it yet , looks like on dark night nights up there by the fort I can hear old [?] Red holler fer helf but 'twant noting' else I could do I reckon. [?] But [?] I don't care 'bout talkin' 'bout that so much lets get back to old times.

Look out there on that fence at them 2 old quilts. Bet you aint never seen none no prettier. Ive been offered by Moreland Nixon fifty dollars er a piece [foe em?] for 'em . But I'll have to be poorer than [?] I am now to take it. [?] the dye for them quilts was made right down at [artin?] Martin's ferry at Grand- Pa Pa's plantation, out of [?] copper as and bark and [?] such like, the thread was spun there , and the cloth woven every speck of it by the negroes on the place. One's the tulip pattern, and I ferget the other name , but tomy way of thinking they dont don't make quilts pretty as them two hanging out there. [hem?] Them en er old china hen dish is all Ive I've got left of [?] Ma's old [?] things, that [been?] [?] belonged to my little sister, ma give it to her and she died when she wont want more en seven years old, 8 so Ive kept it as er remembrance of her.

Ive got [rand-a's Grand-Pa's brother pocket book I forgot that, lined with red silk and his name [arius artin?] Marius Martin' cut in it. Pa cut it there I'm pretty sure. Lots of folks wants to buy them quilts but I aint hungry yet. Well I better feed the old layd lady's chickens and put em 'em up for her of she 'll be hopping out here herself 'fore long. Tell Miss Mead , the lady what sees [?] about the niggers, to come out any time after to day

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en I'll go with her down on the bend 'cause don't no body hardly know this country and the folks down in de bottoms like I do , just been here so long. I reckon, bout but some times I think it wont be so long now. The old ladys lady's trying persuade me not to farm none this year, didn't really farm none to 'mount to nothing last year, jes er little corn on this here six acres , but I hates to [?] give/ up , hates to git old en [?] I doan want to be dependent. [?] I ain't yet , Ive I've got a little saved up, mine en the old lady's nest egg I calls it , and that reminds me I better be putting' up them chickens 'fore I hears somethin' I aint after hearin'. She's might mighty peaceful tho the old lady is, when she's right well , but she's been ailin er a heap looks like lately.